

Meet the artists of 'Breakthrough'



Sunday's Spotlight section puts the spotlight on "Breakthrough," the terrific new [Fresno Art Museum show](http://fresnoartmuseum.org/) (<http://fresnoartmuseum.org/>) featuring six vibrant artists with Fresno connections. You can read my centerpiece column about the show [here](http://bit.ly/Y7E5om) (<http://bit.ly/Y7E5om>). (Sneak preview: I loved it. My only regret with this column is that I didn't have enough space to go into as much detail as I would have liked with each of the six individual exhibitions that make up "Breakthrough." But I'm sure I'll have more to say in the weeks to come.) Bee photographer Craig Kohlruss and John Alvin collaborated on the image above.

I asked each of the six artists to complete an email interview with me about themselves and their work in the show. We feature interview excerpts in Sunday's print edition. (Also, don't forget that we have [a nice online photo gallery](http://bit.ly/14eIOsC) (<http://bit.ly/14eIOsC>) where you can view examples of each artist's work.) On the jump you'll find the extended versions of the interviews.



LESLIE BATTY

Current city: Fresno/Clovis – residence in Clovis, studio in Fresno.

Connection to Fresno or the Valley: I was born in Fresno and have lived here for most of my life. Some of both my parents' families of seamstresses, artists, and school teachers have lived in Fresno or the Fresno area for several generations.

Age: a state of mind.

Genre: Painting, mixed media.

Biggest career break to date: There is no moment I would call a “big career break” but a steady progression of small breaks and a lot of work. Obtaining my studio in 2010 gave me access to an established gallery and a work space – a little room where I could create my big ideas.

Why you think your art stands out: I don't think of my art as standing-out; it is simply one voice in a visual conversation happening around us. For me, the large scale of life-size artwork evokes a psychological as well as a physiological response. Your whole body is mirrored by the work and included in its space.

In terms of career, where do you hope to be in 5 years? I hope to be creating more work than I am now and experimenting with new ideas, however and wherever that may be.

Brief description of your work in the exhibition: Much of my work is large figurative painting and collage. Exploring the construction of feminine identity in Western society, my work presents dress-making as a metaphor, fairytale figures, language and art history references that are familiar and yet unusual in context and their relationships to one another.

Website: www.lesliebatty.com



CALEB DUARTE PIÑON

Current city: San Cristobal De Las Casas, Chiapas, Mexico

Connection to Fresno or the Valley: As a family, in 1981, we moved from the border town of Nogales, Mexico to Corcoran, Calif., to work the cotton fields. After high school I studied at Fresno City College with some great artist educators before heading out to San Francisco and Chicago to continue my studies.

Age: 35.

Genre: mixed media and social sculpture.

Biggest career break to date: I don't see art as a career path. There are many living working artists that just create and live art as life. Sociologist Erich Fromm notes, "No great radical idea can survive unless it is embodied in individuals where lives are the message." Artists are imagining and creating alternatives to a dominant culture that has a strong grasp on cultural and individual expression. The Valley is a great example of this kind of cultural suffocation driven by a consumer materialistic car culture. We also live in a career-driven society where success is measured by standards not set by one's own search for happiness or by personal enlightenment but rather by a violent economic system. I think artists, cultural promoters and educators create in order to seek out moments for critical thought.

Why you think your art stands out: Lately the work I have been investigating is collaborative community performances. That is to say that the work is integrated in the way of life of different disenfranchised communities that are building their own alternatives to the capitalist system. Here we present a problem and act it out in sometimes a two-week workshop. This work stands out because they take a position within the public realm to challenge society's notions of Normality.

In terms of career, where do you hope to be in 5 years? I'm the co-founder and director of an experimental art space in Chiapas, Mexico. We work with a large variety of communities. From working children to political prisoners to contemporary theater groups. I would like eventually to work in places like Palestine or refugee camps in Lebanon or with in communities in Fresno. I think it's a time where the work needs to be explored on the ground and outside the artist studio.

Brief description of your work in the exhibition: This piece is a 12 by 6 foot slab of dirt protruding from the wall and floating. There is a live human figure, a local Chicano artist by the name of Arturo Villanueva standing inside the earth holding the weight of the slab. (Only on opening night of the exhibition.) I wanted to show the body in resistance against architectural tensions as a reflection to a breaking point that society will have to soon confront.



LAURA GOLDSTONE

Current city: The ever-beautiful Portland, OR. I wanted to live in a place that would be kind to my body and my creativity.

Connection to Fresno or the Valley: I grew up in Selma. Here's a list of valley things that never leave me; sun-pounded colors, the sound of frogs in canals, 1 am train whistles, foggy day schedules, the smell of water hitting the soil in the orchards on summer nights, and the Blossom Trail's expansive colors.

Age: I was born the day after Mt. Saint Helen's erupted in 1980. You do the math.

Genre: That's for the critics to sort out when I die.

Biggest career break to date: For me, art is a vocation. The big breaks are about the ability to express and are as small as arranging your tools or as large as exhibiting in a public space. It's a matter of perspective. So far, my biggest career break would have to be unemployment; it did wonders for my creative life.

Why you think your art stands out: I don't, I just strive to get the ideas that I find intriguing out of my head or sketchbook and into physical form.

In terms of career, where do you hope to be in 5 years? Exactly where I am right now. Being self-employed gives me the freedom to noodle around with new mediums and ideas and the time to witness my works growth.

Brief description of your work in the exhibition: The title is "Hush," and I think of it as a fragment from a haunting dream that has become real and is slowly fading. Physically, it is thousands of leaves, hand stitched into a blanket-like structure that is suspended and slowly deteriorating.

Website: I don't update the site too often, but it's www.lauragoldstone.com (<http://www.lauragoldstone.com/>) and if you want to see what my life really consists of you can visit my blog, just google Papersledgehammer.



TERRANCE REIMER

Current city: North Fork — “The Exact Center of California”

Connection to Fresno or the Valley: Upon moving to California from the Midwest in 1999, the Central Valley, and particularly, Fresno welcomed me with open arms as a wayward artistic refugee.

Age: Old enough to know better.

Genre: photography.

Biggest career break to date: In addition to this interview with the Fresno Bee, my photograph “Karaoke Night” was acquired by the Santa Barbara Museum of Art for inclusion in the ‘Portrayal/Betrayal’ photography exhibition in 2012. Surreal to see my work hanging with several of my photography heroes: Henri Cartier-Bresson, Paul Strand, W. Eugene Smith, Diane Arbus.

Why you think your art stands out: I really don’t know if my art stands out or not. I presently make pictures purely as a means of personal expression of life lived. This quote taken from the essay, “Photography and Meaning” written by Todd Roeth, resonates with my photographic intent: “So when I speak of photography I mean it personally. Photography is to me, above all else, biography. It is a record of where I was present, an active pursuit of understanding the world as I encountered it. Photography is paying reverence, and understanding. The images are a receipt of perhaps the only thing money cannot buy — Time — my time, my biography.”

Full essay: <http://www.nightfox.es/photography-and-meaning-the-tumblr-blues/>
(<http://www.nightfox.es/photography-and-meaning-the-tumblr-blues/>)

In terms of career, where do you hope to be in 5 years? The plan is to be dividing my creative time in Europe and California.

Brief description of your work in the exhibition: Let’s pretend this is a ‘tweet’ about random descriptions inspired by those commenting about my pictures in this exhibition. A few of the words following the hashtags may include: humorous, candid, clever, ironic, delightful, tender, mysterious, provocative, intriguing, thoughtful, engaging and most likely, colorful.

Website: www.terrancereimer.com
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NIGEL ROBERTSON

Current city: Fresyes

Connection to Fresno: I grew up here. My family moved here 27 years ago from Yosemite.

Genre: Plein Air Landscape Painting.

Biggest career break to date: My last Fresno Art Museum Show in 2007, and after that I went to the Florence Academy of Art in Florence, Italy (2009-2011) I believe that was the greatest experience of my life living in the city that was the birth place of the renaissance. Every day was an adventure. I went to every museum and art show possible on weekends. I went to the Pitti Palace almost every other weekend, and the Uffizi Galley which both contain many great italian masterpieces. I saw the Caravaggio Retrospective show in Rome.

Why you think your art stands out: Its not my intention to stand out. Im more concerned with being honest in my depiction of nature. My work is just a simple explanation of events that have unfolded before me, free of mystery, and pretention. Everyone wants to be an artist and so few want to learn to draw. Even If I could perfectly reproduce the effects of nature in a painting, I still would not be close.

In terms of career, where do you hope to be in 5 years? I have so many plans and dreams. Talk is cheap. We will just have to wait and see.

Brief description of your work in the exhibition: This is what happens after I get cooped up in a dark tennebrist studio for two years. It was like seeing the world from a new pair of eyes. This show is the result of an incredible experience.

Website: www.nigelrobertson.com



JULIA WOLI SCOTT

Current city: Downtown Fresno

Connection to Fresno or the Valley: I lived in Fresno as a child and then my family moved to Tollhouse in the early 1990's. I left the Valley at 19, returning in 2005 with the realization that this is where I want to build my life — as my home by choice, not default. I live in a loft near my studio in downtown.

Age: born 1980, Sanger.

Genre: drawings in oil paint and turpenoid on canvas.

Biggest career break to date: Corridor 2122 members Steve and Amy Dent offered me a solo show in February of 2012, and that singular spark of opportunity, for which I am profoundly grateful, has propelled me forward through a year of exponentially increasing opportunity.

Why you think your art stands out: Mental landscapes, describing a psychological geography without properties of gravity, surround and saturate the figurative. This ambiguous space accentuates the mind's biases and focuses on the containment of past damage. The mental subject, suspended in time and space, can then be examined without judgement. The model represents herself, the artist, and the viewer interchangeably.

In terms of career, where do you hope to be in 5 years? In one year, I've experienced more change than I would ever have imagined. I know that what comes next will be vastly different than any expectations I may have, but I would hope to be established as a practicing studio artist, showing nationally, and well on my way to a lifelong career.

Brief description of your work in the exhibition: figurative depictions of fleeting psychological landscapes.

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